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Evans, Ernest

A West Australian railway employee killed while on military service for their country



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

Employer:	Western Australian Government Railways & Tramways
Branch:	Way & Works
Designation:	Repairer

Rail employment notes: Born 2/10/1890. Joined WAGR 24/9/1908 aged 17 as Repairer, Ways & Works Branch, Kirupp (now named Kirup). Transferred to Mokine 9/6/1914 and to Shackleton 8/7/1914.

("Repairer" was a track maintenance worker in a gang responsible for upkeep of an allocated section of railway line. A typical gang might include between 3 and 6 Repairers with one Leading Hand Repairer and a Ganger in charge. The WAGR Annual report for 1914/15 showed they employed 882 Repairers at 8 shillings per day, with many at very small settlements or tent camps.)

Granted leave to join AIF 12/4/1916 (Service No.6508). Killed in action 11/4/1917

Military service information:

Conflict:	First World War 1914-1918
Service:	Australian Imperial Force
Military unit:	16th Australian Infantry Battalion
Service number:	6508
Date of death:	11 April 1917
Place of death:	France
Rank:	Private
Age:	26

Burial/commemoration: Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Villers-Bretonneux, Picardie, France

Ernest Evans was born in York but both his parents were dead when he enlisted in the AIF at Merredin. He had no previous military experience and gave his occupation as Railway employee. Ernest nominated his eldest brother John as his Next of kin. He enlisted on 14 April 1916 and began his training at Blackboy Military Camp. Recruit Evans attended the Signal School between 30 May 1916 and 1 August 1916 following which he was posted to 21st Reinforcements to 16 Battalion with the regimental number 6508.

Private Evans departed Australia from Fremantle on 13 October 1916 on A39 HMAT *Port Macquarie* and disembarked at Plymouth UK on 12 December 1916 and marched into 4 Training Battalion that same day. Training continued until 8 February 1917 when he departed England through Folkestone aboard SS *Princess Victoria*. In France he passed through 4th Australian Details Base Depot (4 ADBD) for 3 days and was then taken-on-strength of 16 Battalion on 11 February 1917. Private Evans was in the party assigned to take the trench OG2 as the Battalion assaulted the heavily fortified town of Bullecourt on 11 April 1917. Sometime later 6020 Private Fleming reported that he saw Private Evans struck by 3 bullets to the abdomen and felt that he was going to die. At the subsequent

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roll call Private Evans failed to answer when his name was called. He was then posted as Missing in action. A Court of Enquiry was held on 30 October 1917 which determined that he had been Killed in action. There was some slight confusion when a different Pte Evans was reported as being a POW but this was discounted by the Official German and Red Cross records.

Private Evans remains were never recovered so he has no known grave but is remembered on the Villers-Bretonneux Australian Memorial.

The Australian War memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France.

Australian soldiers killed in France, whose bodies could be found for relocation, are buried and marked by the rows of gravestones seen to left and right.

The wing walls to both sides of the central watch tower record, carved in stone, the names of Australian soldiers killed in France but with no known grave – tragically, more than 11 000 men. The largest number recorded from one unit is from 28th Battalion – some 365 West Australians.



Additional/personal information:

Ernest Evans was born in York WA in 1890, the tenth of eleven children born to David Evans and Mary Evans (nee Flemming or Fleming) over the long span of 1870 to 1893. (WA BDM 1358/1890 etc) It appears that his mother died in 1894. A marriage is recorded of David Evans to Rose May Warren in 1901 (WA BDM 1717/1901) however it is not clear if this a second marriage for Ernest's father or a marriage of Ernest's elder brother also named David Evans, who was born in 1874.

Ernest Evans was single but it appears from family notices that he was engaged to be married to a Miss Olive Craig:

> EVANS.—A loving tribute to the memory of Private E. Evans (Ernie), killed in action somewhere in France on April 11, 1917, previously reported missing. Should death snatch me from the stricken field, To thee alone my life its banner yield; Take thou my place my country to defend With it, with me, abide world without end. —Inserted by Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Craig and Kenneth, also his fiancee, Olive Craig. *The West Australian* 29/12/1917p1

> EVANS.—A loving tribute to the memory of Private E. Evans (Ernie), killed in action somewhere in France on April 11, 1917, previously reported missing. —Inserted by Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Craig and Kenneth, also his fiancee, Olive Craig. *Western Mail* 4/1/1918p19

Despite his large family, no family notices have been found from parents not siblings.

Private Evans left a Will which was administered by the WA Trustee Company but the beneficiaries were not recorded in accessible Army records. For his service he was entitled to receive the British War Medal and the Victory Medal which were issued to his brother together with other memorabilia.

Further information and/or photos may be added as available. Information may also be found on the Australian War Memorial website: *https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people*

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Abbreviations: WAGR= Western Australian Government Railways (& Tramways at some periods); MRWA= Midland Railway of Western Australia; BDM=Western Australian Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages website; AWM=Australian War Memorial (Canberra and website); CWGC= Commonwealth War Graves Commission (including website). DVA=Department of Veterans' Affairs (including website)

Acknowledgements: Rail employment notes from WAGR Honour Roll and WAGR records held by State Records Office, Perth, transcribed by J.Austin 2019. Military history researched by Dr G.M.Galvin. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------

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